



Staff guidance: Student pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption (adopted from ECU guidance)

1. The Equality Act 2010 identifies pregnancy as a protected characteristic; therefore, the university and its academic partners have a legal duty to ensure students are appropriately supported during this time.
2. This document provides guidance to staff on what to do should a student disclose that they are pregnant, whilst on maternity/paternity leave or seeking to adopt.
3. The information contained within this document will be useful to staff within Student Services, Personal Academic Tutors (PATs), Module Leaders and Programme Leaders.
4. If the student is in the UHI Department of Nursing and Midwifery, they **MUST** disclose as stated within the department policy.
5. Specific guidance for Postgraduate Research students is set out in Appendix B
6. This document sets out best practice which will apply across the student body. Some elements relate to the Equality Act 2010 and these which have been highlighted in bold.
7. In depth guidance by the Equalities Challenge Unit (ECU) can be found [here](#)

1. Student Pregnancy

Informing staff and student decisions

1. When a student discloses they are pregnant it is important that they are provided with consistent, unbiased support and advice to enable them to make informed choices. Not all advice relating to pregnancy and maternity can be provided by staff and it is important that staff members are aware of other sources of advice and support. In particular, academic staff should refer students to their local Student Services who can provide initial advice and support.
2. When a student discloses their pregnancy, proof is not required as GPs seldom conduct pregnancy tests if a home pregnancy-testing kit has been used. However, if it is required to take into consideration the impact of the student's pregnancy or maternity on their course attendance or attainment, evidence of appointments and letters from the student's GP, midwife or health worker can be requested.
3. The student should be encouraged to inform their local health centre or GP, if they have not done so already.
4. Information concerning a student's pregnancy should be treated sensitively and only passed on to others with the student's consent. When and who informs staff and fellow students about the pregnancy should be agreed in writing with the student.
5. Members of staff contacted by a student should not attempt to influence their decisions or assume that the pregnancy is unwanted or unplanned. Assumptions should not be made

about whether the student intends to proceed with their pregnancy on the basis of age, disability, gender identity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, or stage of study or research.

Health & Safety

1. Pregnancy should not be equated with poor health; however, there are health and safety considerations that arise during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and these risks need to be assessed.
2. The highest risk of damage to the baby is during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy; therefore, students should be encouraged to notify their PAT or Student Services team as early as possible in their pregnancy, so that a health and safety assessment can be conducted.
3. For many courses, the risk will be low. Courses that involve the following are more likely to present greater risks:
 - Physical activity, including lifting and carrying
 - Use of chemicals, including paints and pesticides
 - Where exposure to infectious disease is a possibility, including lab work, healthcare provision, and looking after animals or dealing with animal products.

Student Support plan

1. For those students who proceed with their pregnancy, a student pregnancy support plan can help to coordinate support and ensure the student's needs are met during pregnancy, following the birth and on the student's return to their course. Support plans should be developed and agreed with the student with the process managed by local Student Services team. Plans can contain the following issues:
 - Communication about the student's pregnancy – Who needs to be informed of the pregnancy? Does the student want fellow students to be made aware? When is the best time to communicate and who will be responsible for the communication?
 - Communication with the student during pregnancy – how do they wish to be communicated with and who is their main contact should they have any questions?
 - Health and Safety – has a risk assessment been completed?
 - Examinations and assessments – will the pregnancy affect their ability to meet deadlines or sit exams and if so what adjustments can be made to ensure they meet the necessary course requirements?
 - Placements and fieldwork – is the student required to undertake a placement/fieldwork as part of their course? If so, will the pregnancy affect their ability to complete appropriately or will other measures need to take place to ensure they can fulfil the necessary requirements.
 - Study and placement abroad – If the student is already abroad, do they wish, and will they be able to, complete their programme of study/placement? If they are required to undertake study/placement abroad which has not yet started, what arrangements will need to be made with the host institution?
 - Maternity-related absence – The student may wish to interrupt their studies e.g. for a year, or they may wish to return soon after giving birth. To ensure arrangements can be made, it is recommended students notify their institution 15 weeks before the expected birth as to when they would like their maternity-related absence to commence.

2. Support plans should be reviewed at key stages, such as when the student is 20 weeks pregnant, 30 weeks pregnant and prior to their return to study, or at key points through the academic year e.g. prior to exams or field trips.
3. Appendix A provides an example of a student support plan

2. Maternity-related absence

1. Very few students are entitled to maternity leave and pay as these entitlements only exist under employment law. For this reason, the guidance refers primarily to maternity-related absence but draws upon employment law, as many protocols established by employment law will assist in ensuring consistent student support.
2. Arrangements for maternity-related absence should apply equally to live and still births after 24 weeks.
3. The student support plan should contain:
 - The date the student intends to start maternity-related absence; and
 - The length of time the student intends to take and the date on which they intend to return.
4. Students are advised to inform the university in writing at least 15 weeks before the baby is due. This will allow sufficient time to liaise with the student, review the student support plan, make any necessary arrangements and ensure information is communicated as required.

Length of maternity-related absence

1. All students are allowed to take maternity-related absence following the birth of their child. It is recommended that, at a minimum, students take 2 weeks compulsory maternity-related absence, or 4 weeks if they are on placement in a factory. This is in line with employment law, and is to ensure the health and safety of the parent following birth. NHS Student Bursaries recommends a minimum of 12 weeks' maternity absence but allows students to return earlier if they have approval from their GP or health worker.
2. Students would normally be allowed to take one year out of study. In exceptional circumstances, students may need to extend the length of maternity leave that they take beyond the standard time allowed, for example in cases of postnatal depression, serious illness or loss of a baby. Students should discuss implications of extended absence with their PAT.
3. If a student wishes to suspend study, rather than take a shorter period of maternity-related absence, this would be in accordance to normal procedures. For further information, please review the university's [withdrawal procedure](#)

Returning from maternity-related absence

1. The date a student intends to return to their studies should be discussed and agreed with the student prior to commencing the period of absence. However, this date may change during the course of the absence, and students should be encouraged to notify the university as soon as possible of any change to their expected return date.

2. Before a student returns from a period of maternity-related absence, consideration should be given to their requirements on return. The student's study options and the continued support to be provided should be discussed with the student in developing their support plan, and can be confirmed with the student prior to their return.

Maternity leave and maternity pay

1. If a student is employed, or has recently left employment, they may be entitled to statutory maternity pay, additional maternity pay or maternity allowance. Further information can be found at www.direct.gov.uk
2. Students in receipt of a stipend, NHS bursary or research council funding are often entitled to maternity leave and paternity pay from their sponsor. Students entitled to a stipend or grant will need to discuss with the appropriate institution contact whether the university needs to inform the sponsor of their pregnancy, and should familiarise themselves with their sponsor's maternity leave and pay policy.
3. Students enrolled on NHS pre-registration courses who are in receipt of the maintenance grant element of the NHS Bursary will receive their normal monthly bursary payments, including any dependent's allowances, during their maternity leave/absence. For further information visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/student-services

Sources of financial support for students during pregnancy and maternity

1. Regulations on student financial support in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland contain provisions for discretion when determining if all or part of a student's grant or loan is payable when a student is absent from their course for reasons other than illness. Consideration will be given to the reason for the student's absence, the length of absence and the financial hardship caused by not paying all or part of the loan/grant. Students should contact their awarding body to discuss further.
2. Many students will be entitled to government welfare benefits and grants, therefore, students should be encouraged to explore these in the first instance, as unlike student loans, they do not have to be repaid. Further information can be found at www.direct.gov.uk

Assessments and Examinations

1. If a student is due to give birth near to or during assessment deadlines or the exam period, and wishes to complete their assessed work or sit their exams, they should not be prevented from doing so.
2. In exams, pregnant students may require more frequent rest and toilet breaks than those who are not pregnant. As a result, the student may need to sit the exam in a separate location from other students.
3. If a student is concerned about sitting exams or meeting assessment deadlines, or if they have a pregnancy related health condition that is exacerbated by stress, they should be advised to seek advice from their midwife or doctor. If they advise against the student sitting an exam or trying to meet the assessment deadline, the programme team should explore an alternative assessment method.
4. If a student is unable to undertake an alternative method of assessment, or if they experience significant pregnancy-related problems in the course of an exam or when undertaking an assessment, they should submit a claim for mitigating circumstances. Students will not be penalised in this situation.

Breastfeeding and resting facilities

1. The **Equality Act 2010** explicitly protects students from less favourable treatment because of breastfeeding, therefore, appropriate facilities should be made available for students to use.
2. If facilities are not currently available, the medical centre or another similar room would be appropriate.
3. The Health and Safety Executive for England, Scotland and Wales states that 'it is good practice to provide a healthy and safe environment for nursing mothers to express and store milk' (HSE, 2004:9). A private space with comfortable seating, with a fridge in it or very close by, is likely to be suitable. It is not appropriate to expect them to use a toilet for breastfeeding, or for storing or expressing milk. If a student does express milk, they will need to store it in a fridge between 2 and 4 °C.
4. A student may require access to a microwave to warm milk if their baby is bottle-fed.
5. Students must inform the university prior to their return if they intend to breastfeed as this will ensure the appropriate facilities are identified.

Breastfeeding in public places

1. The **Equality Act 2010** provides protection to those who want to breastfeed in public places.
2. Tensions may arise if other students feel uncomfortable, e.g. due to their religious beliefs, however, where this occurs the needs of breastfeeding student should take precedence.

International students and those on placement or studying abroad

Travel

1. Students should be able to travel during pregnancy, unless they are advised not to by their doctor or midwife. However, the following should be considered:
 - Airlines may not allow travel beyond 36 weeks or 32 weeks if the pregnancy is complicated or multiple. Airlines have different policies; therefore, students will need to check individual airline policies before travelling.
 - UK students who are on placement or studying abroad will need to check their visa terms and conditions as they may need to extend their stay or return at a later date.
 - Pregnancy is considered a pre-existing condition by insurance companies. To ensure they are adequately covered, students will need to check their insurance protects them for pre-existing conditions.

UK student visas

1. If an international student becomes pregnant during their studies, they may wish to stay for longer in the UK. However, presently, students who require a visa to study in the UK cannot extend their visa for reasons relating to pregnancy or maternity.

Liaison with study abroad or placement provider

1. The university will need to liaise with the host institution or placement provider to ensure, where possible, the pregnant student's needs are met.

Student accommodation

1. Students should not be asked to leave their existing accommodation because they are pregnant. They should be supported in finding suitable accommodation prior to the arrival of their baby or prior to return from maternity related absence.
2. Accommodation policies should consider the needs of students who become pregnant during their course, and where possible, priority for family accommodation should be given to existing students who become new mothers during their course. If no family accommodation available, students should be supported to help them find suitable privately rented or local authority housing.
3. Contracts for own or contracted halls of residence should allow students to end the contract early because of pregnancy or maternity without penalty.

3. Paternity

1. Entitlement to paternity leave and pay exists within employment law, and consequently, very few students are eligible to such leave or pay. It is recommended that students who are partners of new mothers are allowed to take paternity-related absence.
2. Under the **Equality Act 2010**, if a male student is treated less favourably because of his female partner's pregnancy, this may constitute discrimination by association on the grounds of sex. For example, if a male student is unable to meet a course deadline due to his female partner's pregnancy and is not given an extension, this may constitute sex discrimination.
3. If the partner of a new mother who is male can take paternity, but a female student in a same-sex relationship whose partner is expecting a child cannot, this may constitute discrimination because of sexual orientation.

Time off for antenatal appointments and in cases of pregnancy-related illness

1. The university will be flexible and allow a student to attend their partner's antenatal appointments, if they wish. Likewise, there should be flexibility around a student who wishes to take time off if their partner has complications with their pregnancy or a serious pregnancy-related illness.

Notification of paternity-related absence

1. A student who wants to take paternity-related absence should inform their Personal Academic Tutor or a member of the Student Services team of their partner's pregnancy at least 15 weeks before the baby is due. Early notification is encouraged as partners may need to attend antenatal appointments.

Length of paternity-related absence

1. The university will allow students' paternity-related absence in line with entitlements that exist in employment law for paternity leave. This is currently a maximum of two consecutive weeks within 56 days of the child being born.
2. In 2011, paternity rights were extended for fathers or partners of new mothers. Under the new regulations, employed fathers or partners of new mothers are entitled to take up to six months additional statutory paternity leave in the second six months of the child's life, as long as the mother has returned to work. This is in addition to the two weeks statutory

leave following the birth of their child. As a result, students may wish to interrupt their study when their partner returns to study or work.

Assessments and placements

1. If a student chooses to sit an examination while their partner is in labour or during their paternity-related absence, they should be made aware of the mitigating circumstances policy. If a student is unable to sit an examination or submit coursework on time due to their partner's pregnancy or labour, or a serious pregnancy-related illness, they should submit a claim for mitigating circumstances.
2. For other compulsory course elements e.g. field trips or work placements, the institution should consider the feasibility of students undertaking them at an alternative time. If this is not possible, justification should be provided in writing.

Paternity Pay

1. If a student is working and considered to be in employment, they may be entitled to paternity leave pay from their employer. If a student has a stipend, NHS bursary or research council funding, they may be entitled to paid paternity leave. Students should familiarise themselves with the terms and conditions of their award.

4. Adoption

1. Students who have been matched for adoption should inform their Personal Academic Tutor or Student Services team. If the student (male or female) is the primary adopter, a plan should be developed in line with the guidance under Section 1 Student Pregnancy. If the student's partner is the primary adopter, upon formal adoption of the child, the student should be allowed time off from studies in line with the advice in the sections in paternity-related absence.
2. If a student has a stipend, NHS bursary or research council funding, they are likely to be allowed a period of paid adoption leave. Students should familiarise themselves with the terms and conditions of their award.

5. Abortion of termination of pregnancy

1. It is important to remember that abortion can be through choice or due to health-related reasons but the emotional impact of both should not be under-estimated. Students considering abortion will be offered counselling by the NHS or a private abortion clinic. They will also be supported after an abortion and local support may also be appropriate.
2. Students should be allowed time off from study for tests before, and to recover after, an abortion. This should be treated in line with the institution's usual sickness absence policy, however, consideration should be given to the impact the abortion has had on a student's ability to meet deadlines and sit examinations.
3. If a student has an abortion for reasons relating to health or the health of the baby, and if they become pregnant again, they are likely to require more tests and monitoring than those who have not had a problematic pregnancy.

4. The charity [Antenatal Results and Choices](#) provides specific advice to students who are considering an abortion for reasons relating to antenatal test results.

6. Miscarriage, still births and neonatal death

1. The emotional impact of these events should not be under-estimated. Staff should be mindful of the support students will need if they miscarry or have a still birth, or if their baby dies shortly after it is born. Any student disclosing such an event should be encouraged to inform their PAT or Student Services and a meeting should be organised with the student to establish the support they are receiving from their healthcare provider and the support available from the institution. If a student does not disclose their situation, there is limited support that can be provided, but if the student has informed us of their pregnancy it may be appropriate to approach the student if they are displaying signs of emotional distress.
2. If a student who has had a miscarriage, still birth or neonatal death becomes pregnant again, they are likely to require more tests and monitoring than other women.

Miscarriage

1. One in four pregnancies end in miscarriage, with it most likely to occur in the first three months of pregnancy.
2. If a student miscarries, they are likely to need time off study for tests and to recover. Consideration should be given to the impact of a miscarriage on a student's ability to meet deadlines and sit examinations.

Still birth and neonatal death

1. Still births occur when a baby dies in the womb or is born dead after 24 weeks of pregnancy. Neonatal deaths occur shortly following birth.
2. A student who has a still birth or whose baby dies shortly after birth should be entitled to the same length of maternity-related absence and financial and wellbeing support as a student whose baby is not stillborn.

APPENDIX A: Student Pregnancy and Maternity Support Form

This form aims to guide discussions with students during pregnancy and maternity. It should be completed and agreed with the student. The form should be reviewed at key stages e.g. 16 weeks pregnant, 24 weeks pregnant and prior to return to study; or at key points of the academic year e.g. prior to exams or fieldtrips. The plan should be reviewed if the student's circumstances change.

CONTACT DETAILS
1.Student's details Name: Address: Telephone: Email address: Student number:
2.Emergency contact's details Relationship to student: Telephone:
3.Course details Course title: Department: Departmental contact: Year of course:
4.Details of the student's first point of contact Name: Title: Location: Telephone: Email:
Key dates (to be reviewed and added to over the course of pregnancy and maternity)
5. What is the student's due date?

6. How many week's pregnant was the student when they provided notification of their pregnancy?

Communication with the student

7. What is the student's preferred method of communication:

- During pregnancy?
- During maternity-related absence?
- On return to study?

Informing other staff and students

8. Who will need to be informed about the student's pregnancy and when would the student like them to be informed?

Name and title

Date

Health and safety assessment (attach copy to this form)

9. Has an assessment been conducted that covers (where relevant):

- The student's course?
- Course placements or study abroad?
- Examinations of other assessments?
- Field trips?
- Return from maternity-related absence?
- Breastfeeding?
- Safety of baby if attending seminars and lectures with a parent?

10. Where changes are required to alleviate or minimise risks, who is responsible for ensuring they are implemented?

Rest facilities

11. Has the student been informed about rest facilities on campus for use by pregnant students?

Pregnancy-related absence

12. Will the dates or times of antenatal appointments affect the student's study?

13. Have you discussed any pregnancy-related illness that has affected the student's ability to undertake their course?

14. If yes to either of the above questions, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to catch up?

Assessments

15. Is the student unable to complete any assessments due to their pregnancy or maternity?

16. If so, provide details:

17. What alternative arrangements have been made for any outstanding or incomplete assessments?

Maternity-related absence (students should provide information in writing at least 15 weeks before their due date)

18. How much maternity-related absence does the student intend to take?

19. When does the student intend to start their maternity-related absence?

20. When does the student intend to return from maternity-related absence?

21. Will the dates of maternity-related absence affect the student's ability to complete any course module requirements?

22. If so, what arrangements have been made to enable the student to complete the module?

23. What information will the student require during maternity-related absence to keep up to date on course developments?

24. Who will be responsible for providing the information to the student?

Financial support

25. Has the student been informed about sources of financial support or been referred to an external organisation that can do so?

26. Is the (UK) student aware of how any benefits they receive will affect their student support entitlements, and vice versa?

27. Specify any follow-up as required:

Baby feeding

28. Does the student intend to feed their baby on university facilities on their return to study?

29. Does the student intend to breastfeed? If so, see health and safety section above.

30. Has the student been informed about the facilities available?

Childcare

31. Has the student been informed about childcare facilities on campus or in the local community?

32. Is the (UK) student aware that their mode of study will affect their childcare funding entitlements? For example part-time students will not receive the same funding as those in full-time study.

International students/those on placement abroad

33. Have international students or students on placements abroad been informed about:

- Possible airline restrictions
- The need to check visa implications of returning home or extending their stay due to pregnancy and maternity?

Students on placement

34. Has the placement provider been notified of the student's pregnancy?

35. Has the placement provider conducted a health and safety assessment?

36. Is the placement provider aware of the institution's policy on supporting students during pregnancy and maternity?

37. Will the student be able to complete their placement?

38. If not, what alternative arrangements will be made?

39. Who is responsible for liaising with the placement provider?

Extenuating circumstances

40. Have students been informed about the institutions mitigating circumstances policy in the event that their pregnancy or maternity affects exams and assessments?

Accommodation

41. Does the student intend to move to alternative accommodation?

42. Has the student received advice on alternative accommodation and terminating existing accommodation contracts?

43. At what point does the student want to move to alternative accommodation?

44. Will the student require university accommodation?

Return to study

45. What support will be provided to the student on their return to study? (eg meetings with key staff, put in contact with other student parents, etc)

Further information

46. Any other information or comments

Signatures

Plan to be reviewed on:

Agreed by staff member

Name

Title

Signature

Date

Agreed by student

Name

Signature

Date

Data protection

The data you have provided will be kept securely and used to ensure the appropriate support is put in place whilst during your pregnancy/maternity/paternity/adoption. Information will be kept confidential and only shared with your approval. Should you wish to get in touch with us about removing your name or email address please contact **(input local student support contact)**

APPENDIX B– Postgraduate Research Students Additional Guidance

Introduction

This policy is provided for all full-time and part-time postgraduate research (PGR) students of the University of the Highlands and Islands but applies in particular to:

- any PGR student who becomes pregnant during their studies (maternity leave);
- any PGR student who is to become a father during his studies (paternity leave);
- any PGR student who is the partner of a student who is pregnant (including a same sex partner) (paternity leave and shared parental leave), and;
- any student becoming a parent during their studies through adoption of a child (adoption leave).

All PGR students in receipt of funding from an external body which is acting as the primary funding source (e.g. Research Councils, Charities and Government/Embassies) should refer to the terms and conditions of their funding for details of entitled periods of maternity, adoption or paternity leave and funding support. The funding end date may be adjusted in line with the funder's terms and conditions.

Employer, visa or funder terms and conditions normally overrule University policy in terms of leave allowances and available funding. By accepting a studentship or visa, the PGR student is agreeing to the specific terms and conditions of the funder, employer or UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

PGR students who are members of staff of the University or a University Academic Partner should follow the appropriate Human Resources policies of their employing institution.

There is no qualifying period, or limit to the number of times a PGR student can take maternity, adoption or paternity leave throughout the degree.

Who you need to tell that you are pregnant:

Following confirmation of pregnancy, the Director of Studies should be notified as soon as possible for health and safety reasons. The University is required to protect the health and safety of all PGR students and others whilst on university premises, including new and expectant

mothers. When assessing risks, the University will pay particular attention to those that could affect the health and safety of new and expectant mothers and their babies.

In consultation with the Director of Studies, all reasonably practicable measures should be taken to prevent exposure to identified risks through the removal of hazards or implementation of controls. If a risk remains which could impact on the health and safety of new or expectant mothers or their babies, appropriate measures will be taken to make sure they are not exposed to that risk. This may include making appropriate adjustments to the research study.

Any queries regarding actions necessary to protect the health of the new/expectant mother and unborn child should be referred to the Student Services Team.

In addition to the University's specific arrangements, it may be useful to read the Government guidelines for health and safety for new and expectant mothers, which can be found here <http://www.hse.gov.uk/mothers/>.

For international PGR students, the visa implications of maternity-related absence should be considered at the earliest possible opportunity and it is vital therefore that the University's International Office is consulted.

Policy and Procedure for all PGR students:

Maternity leave

1. PGR students may interrupt their degree for a maximum of twelve months for maternity leave.
2. Any PGR student wishing to take a period of maternity leave must contact the UHI Graduate School as soon as practicable and when maternity leave dates have been agreed with the Director of Studies – this should be no later than 15 weeks before the baby is due.
3. The normal suspension application procedure should be followed when a student intends to take a period of maternity leave. A suspension of studies application should be made and should normally include a copy of the medical certificate confirming the date the baby is due.
4. The earliest that maternity leave may commence is 11 weeks before the baby is due. Maternity leave will begin automatically if a PGR student is unable to continue studies due to a pregnancy related illness within the 4-week period before the baby is due, and the Director of Studies should undertake to notify the UHI Graduate School accordingly.
5. During the pregnancy, any period of pregnancy-related sick leave beyond the 36th week of pregnancy may automatically trigger commencement of the maternity leave. The Director of Studies must notify UHI Graduate School of such instances, and confirmation may be required from the student's doctor that they are fit to return to study.
6. Maternity leave is calculated separately from a standard period of suspension of studies and the thesis submission deadline will be adjusted in line with the amount of any maternity leave taken.

7. The period of maternity leave cannot be broken by other types of absences. If a PGR student becomes ill during the maternity period, the absence is treated as part of the maternity leave up to the end of that maternity leave period.
8. The Director of Studies should discuss with the student any steps which may be taken to support a smooth return to study following the period of interruption. This may include offering advice on self-guided study, if required, and discussing what academic support will be offered on return to study.
9. PGR students in receipt of a University of the Highlands and Islands studentship award and receiving a maintenance stipend should refer to the additional policy below.

Resumption of studies after maternity leave

10. PGR students should not return to study within 2 weeks of giving birth for health and safety reasons.
11. The PGR student will be responsible for confirming that they are ready to resume their studies at the end of their agreed period of maternity leave. They should inform their Director of Studies that they are to return so that the appropriate arrangements can be made in terms of programme enrolment etc.
12. If a PGR student wishes to return to studies before the planned return date, the UHI Graduate School should be notified at least 2 weeks before the new return date.
13. PGR students who wish to return to study later than had been agreed previously must seek permission from their Director of Studies and, if s/he is in agreement, request a further interruption to studies.
14. At an appropriate time before their return - or as soon as practical after - the PGR student should meet with their Director of Studies to ensure that appropriate academic support is provided, and any necessary adjustments are made to facilitate a smooth return to their programme of study.
15. If a full-time PGR student returning to study after the birth of a child seeks permission to study on a part-time basis, it would be reasonable to consider the possibility of adjusting their mode of study. N.B. Some Research Council-funded PGR students are not allowed to alter their mode of study more than once.

Adoption leave

16. PGR students may interrupt their degree for a maximum of twelve months for adoption leave and leave can be taken either from the date of child placement OR no more than 14 days (including weekends and public holidays) prior to the date of child placement.

17. PGR students should discuss their forthcoming adoption leave with the Director of Studies as early as possible.
18. Once adoption leave dates have been agreed, the normal suspension of studies application procedure should be followed and should normally include the matching certificate provided by the adoption agency. The form must be submitted to the UHI Graduate School within seven days of the student being notified by the adoption agency that they have been matched with a child for adoption.
19. Adoption leave is calculated separately from a standard period of suspension of studies and the thesis submission deadline will be adjusted in line with the amount of any adoption leave taken.
20. If a PGR student adopts a child jointly with a partner, the adoption leave (and pay provision if appropriate, see below) is only available to one of the partners and is not available in circumstances where a child is not newly matched for adoption, for example when a step-parent adopts a partner's child/children.
21. PGR students in receipt of a University of the Highlands and Islands studentship award and receiving a maintenance stipend should refer to the additional policy below.

Resumption of Studies after adoption leave

22. If a PGR student wishes to return to studies before the planned return date, the UHI Graduate School should be notified at least 2 weeks before the new return date.
23. PGR students who wish to return to study later than had previously been agreed must seek permission from their Director of Studies and, if they are in agreement, request a further interruption to studies.
24. Any PGR student who has been studying full-time but who indicates they wish to return to study on a part-time basis following adoption leave will receive sympathetic consideration of their request. N.B. Some Research Council-funded PGR students are not allowed to alter their mode of study more than once.

Paternity Leave

25. Paternity leave is granted to PGR students whose relationship with the mother and the child is one of the following:
 - They are the baby's biological father
 - They are married to the mother
 - They are the mother's partner (a partner is someone who lives with the mother of the baby in an enduring family relationship but is not an immediate relative. This also includes a female partner in a same sex marriage)

26. A total of 14 days (including weekends and public holidays) paternity leave may be taken at any time during a partner's pregnancy or within three months following birth. The 14 days must be taken in one block.
27. A request for paternity leave does not require formal approval from the UHI Graduate School and will not be viewed as a formal suspension of studies and there will be no change to the funding end date (if applicable) or thesis submission date. However the PGR student must inform their Director of Studies before taking paternity leave.
28. If more than 4 weeks leave is required this must be taken as Shared Parental Leave (see below) or suspension of studies.
29. PGR students who intend to take a suspension of studies for an extended period of paternity leave should follow the normal suspension of studies procedure and provide a medical documentary evidence of the partner's pregnancy or a copy of the child's birth certificate/medical certificate.

Shared Parental Leave

30. Please refer to the main UHI Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Guidance, point 3.2.
31. The University is happy to consider requests for shared parental leave from a PGR student. However, verifying the leave and (if relevant) funding entitlement is complex, and eligibility requirements must be considered on a case by case basis. Therefore, anyone wishing to take shared parental leave should, in the first instance, contact UHI Graduate School.

Additional policy for PGR students in receipt of a University-funded studentship award (i.e. not an external grant provider, research council or organisation)

32. All PGR students in receipt of a University of the Highlands and Islands-funded studentship award and receiving a maintenance stipend will be entitled to continue to receive their stipend support at the standard rate during the first 26 weeks of **maternity leave**. The following 13 weeks will be paid at a level commensurate with employee entitlements to statutory maternity pay. Students are able to take a further 13 weeks of unpaid maternity leave to provide a total of 52 weeks maternity leave.

In order to qualify for maternity stipend payments as outlined above, PGR students must have been registered as a research student of the University for at least 26 weeks by the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

33. All PGR students in receipt of a University of Highlands studentship award and receiving a maintenance stipend will be entitled to 39 weeks paid **adoption leave**. An additional 13 week unpaid adoption leave may also be permitted. Paid adoption leave may be granted on the same basis as maternity leave, outlined above.

In order to qualify for adoption stipend payments as outlined above, a student must be newly matched with a child for adoption by an approved adoption agency. In addition, PGR students must have been registered as a research student of the University continuously for 26 weeks leading into the week in which they are notified of being matched with a child for adoption.

34. The studentship will be held in abeyance during the period of the maternity or adoption leave. N.B. Studentships and postgraduate studies should not normally be held in abeyance for more than 12 months.
35. The PGR student must notify the Director of Studies and the UHI Graduate School if they are not able to return to study by the end of the maternity or adoption leave. A PGR student who does not return to complete their studies following a period of maternity adoption or paternity leave will be required to repay the stipend they received during their maternity adoption or paternity leave period.
36. If a PGR student is taking paternity-related absence, the full stipend is paid during this time. Any further periods of paternity leave will be unpaid and the studentship will be held in abeyance during this period. N.B. Studentships and postgraduate studies should not normally be held in abeyance for more than 12 months.
37. University PGR tuition fee-only award holders will receive no funding from the University during the period of maternity adoption or paternity leave.

Externally funded PGR students

38. Not all funders provide financial support to cover for - or permit multiple periods of - maternity, adoption or paternity leave. UKRI (formerly RCUK) and certain other funders, provide maternity pay only if the PGR student is in receipt of a studentship, i.e. fees and stipend payments rather than fees-only. However, other funders may only support unpaid leave.
39. An external funder is not required to continue its financial support during maternity, adoption or paternity leave and its terms and conditions of funding should be checked to see if it is able to provide funding during such time.
40. If no funding exists for maternity, adoption or paternity leave within a funder's or an employer's terms and conditions, or the PGR student is self-funded or is in receipt of a University tuition fee-only award, no funding will be due from the University during the period of maternity, adoption or paternity leave. PGR students should contact the UHI Graduate School or the Student Services Team to enquire if other funds are available to them.